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Carter says leaks by Congress are threat to national security

By Brooks Jackson

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WASHINGTON — President Carter summoned key members of Congress to the White House yesterday to hear his complaints that congressional leaks of classified information were damaging national security.

Senate Minority Leader Howard H. Baker Jr. (R., Tenn.) said afterward that Carter had told the group that intelligence sources were drying up because they feared their confidential information would find its way into news reports.

A White House official, who asked not to be named, said that Carter had acknowledged that some leaks came from within his administration, and that he had not suggested how the legislators should stem their own leaks.

The official also said that Carter had pledged to continue supplying classified information to legislators in line with recent agreements to keep Congress aware of certain U.S. intelligence activities.

"We had a long talk about leaks," Baker said. "Leaks are an epidemic disease in Washington, and I suppose they'll continue to be. But if you can't stop them, at least you ought to slow them down."

Sen. Barry Goldwater (R., Ariz.) said Carter opened the discussion about leaks because the situation was "getting serious."

"The leaks that we are concerned about cover a general classification of leaks that have been published in the New York Times and the Washington Post over a long period of time," Goldwater said.

The White House official said that no single story or news organization prompted Carter's concern.